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GRAFTON.

HISTORICAL ORATION

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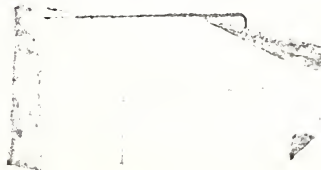
AT THE

CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

HELD AT

GRAFTON, MASS.,

JULY 4TH, 1876.



Worcester:

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CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

AT

GRAFTON, MASS.

ORATION

BY

REV. E. FRANK HOWE.

ORATION.

You have been pleased to call me to discharge to-day the pleasant and important duty of speaking concerning the history of Grafton. I make no attempt to conceal the fact that the invitation, coming so unexpectedly and so heartily, from my native town and the home of my boyhood, to take such a responsible part in the proceedings of this day— a day destined to be memorable in the history of the nation as well as of the town—has given to me the keenest gratification. I esteem it an honor of which one may justly be proud—an honor as great as I know it to be undeserved.

I speak of the duty assigned me as an important one. I esteem it such because of the relation of local to general history. If all the cities and towns in this country were this day to put on record the more important facts and traditions connected with their history, the future historians of the individual states, and of the nation, would have an inexhaustible fountain of material from which to draw. On the title-page of his admirable history of Worcester, Mr. Lincoln has put a quotation, in which it is said, "These local annals are full of little things, names, dates and facts, and rumors of every sort, which seem at first sight almost too small to be noticed. Many of these little things which we speak of are little only in size and name. They are full of rich meaning. They are graphic and characteristic in a high

degree. They suggest far more than they say. They illustrate classes of men and ages of time. They are small but brilliant lights on the walls of the past, pouring floods of splendor from their niches upon the abysses around them." Such being the relation of local to general history, he who gathers up the recorded incidents, and the floating traditions, connected with any community, has an important trust in hand. And that community which has peculiar facilities and unusually strong incentives for keeping in mind the facts of its own history, is particularly fortunate. Such facilities and incentives Grafton finds in the fact that the centuries of its own age terminate midway the centuries of the nation, and thus it comes to pass that twice each century, and at nearly equal intervals, the history of this town passes under review, and the more important events are put on record. When he who addresses you to-day was a child of two years, another, of honored name in the annals of this town, delivered, probably very near this spot, the historical oration commemorative of the completion of a hundred years of its history. And so possibly the child is now born, and perhaps is here present, who, at the ripe age of 60 or 65 years, will deliver the address at the celebration which shall mark the completion of two hundred years of the history of Grafton.

From what I have said you will recall the fact that Grafton is not one of the daughters of the Nation. She was in at the nation's birth, and at that time was a vigorous and sedate matron of nearly a half-century. She witnessed, aye, rather I must say, she experienced herself, a full share of the painful suspense, the alternating of hope and fear, of desire and dread, which precede the birth of nations as well as of individuals; she bore

herself much of the dreadful pain through which the nation struggled into existence; she listened, doubtless with maternal joy, to the new-born nation's first utterance, which, instead of an infantile wail, was a manly Declaration of Independence; she watched the new nation with fond pride—a pride at times sadly tempered with anxious fears—during the years of early youth, and she saw it pass on to maturity and take its place among the nations of the earth. And now, when the nation is celebrating its centennial birthday, we, the sons and daughters of Grafton, some of us to the manor born, and some foster children, are met to hear and tell, some for the first time, and a few for the second time, what our *alma mater* was doing during the years before the nation's birth, and what she has been doing during the century since.

We are able to catch the first faint flickerings of historical light, the earliest hints of the approaching dawn of civilization over these regions, within a month of eleven years after the landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth. At that time, that is, in January of 1632, Governor Winthrop led an excursion up the Charles River. And he says that, after they had gone up about fifteen miles, they ascended a very high rock, where * “they might see all over Neipnett, and a very high hill† due West about forty miles off.” Here we have the record of probably the very first approach of the white man to this region, of the first glimpse which the eyes of civilized men ever caught of the country hereabout. The name given to a large territory including this town, and extending as far west as the Connecticut River, was the Nipmuck Country. It was nearly four years after

* Winthrop's History of New England, Vol. I, p. 83. † Wachusett.

Gov. Winthrop and his party had glanced over this country to the "very high hill due West," and fifteen years after Plymouth Rock had been hallowed, before the feet of the white men pressed the soil here. At that time, in the Autumn of 1635,* a company of emigrants started west. That uncertain and ever-shifting locality named the West, which has now retreated to the shore of the Pacific, was located then in Connecticut. These emigrants, sixty in number, who had found the land about Massachusetts Bay too straightened for them, passed through this county on their way to Weathersfield. From the time when these emigrants pass through, or near, this place, it is eleven years before we learn anything further concerning it. At the expiration of this period, the real history of the town begins; and this beginning of its history is of a religious and missionary character. † John Eliot, the Apostle to the Indians, had conceived his grand idea of "civilizing and evangelizing the natives of New England," and had given himself to this work. In carrying out his plan, he probably came to Grafton, about the year 1646, to preach to the Indians. Thus, in 26 years after the first settlement of New England by the whites, the work, which was destined to exert a powerful influence over the character of this town, was begun. The character of New England, that which has made it like leaven in this nation, permeating, and diffusing itself through all sections and classes of this growing and powerful land, is very largely, more largely than to anything else, due to the religious principles of its founders. The early history of this town, as of New England generally, is chiefly a history of the church in it. In fact, the church record, for nearly a

* Winthrop's History of New England, Vol. I., p. 204. † Gookin, Mass. Hist. Col., 1st Series, I., 168.

century, is as important as the town record, and the two, to a very great extent, cover the same ground. The beginning of the religious history, and so of the general history of the town, is traceable directly to the preaching of Eliot. So I have named this as the period at which the real history of Grafton begins. It was not, however, till nearly a century later that it was known by the name of Grafton, and it was not until eight years later that even the boundary of the town was definitely settled. At the period of which we are speaking, 1646, and until 1735, the place was known by the name of Hassanamisco, sometimes, in the earliest recorded allusions, written Hassanamesit. * Probably the latter was the name until it was set off as an Indian town in 1654, when it was changed to the former. † The name signifies "a place of small stones." The appropriateness of the name is apparent to even the most casual observer who passes through the town; and certainly no boy who has ever "rode the horse to plow," or rattled and battered his hoe among the stones to get earth enough, by spoonfuls, to cover corn or potatoes in planting-time, will be at loss for the origin of the name. And, by the way, who knows what part these very stones have had in forming the character and in extending the influence of this town! Courage to encounter difficulties, perseverance under difficulties, unceasing industry and frugality, all were absolutely necessary in order to secure a subsistence, and win a competence from the rocky farms of this town. And the miles upon miles of stone fences, some of them with foundations broad and deep, and built far higher than is necessary for the ordinary purposes of a fence, in order to dispose of the super-

* Wilson's Sermon, p. 4. † Gookin's Mass. Hist. Col., 1st Series, Vol. I., p. 184.

abundance of material, these tell what the town must have been, and of the persevering toil which has been required in removing these "small stones"—and some of them not so very small either. But from these stony farms, and because they were stony, have come generations of daring, persevering, industrious and frugal sons and daughters. And also because the farms were stony, these same sons and daughters have pushed out into the world, giving the talents acquired in early life, or transmitted from parent to child, to other pursuits, and to building up and moulding other communities. Grafton has extended her influence over many portions of this land, and in various walks of life, because, in a certain sense which you will readily understand, so many of her brave sons and fair daughters have been *stoned* out of town. It is almost a pity that the old and significant name of Hassanamisco ever gave place to that of the English Duke.

Eliot seems to have been quite successful in his labors here, for I find the following record concerning the General Court of Massachusetts in 1654: * "At this Court, likewise, Mr. John Eliot, minister of Roxbury, that had heretofore by them been encouraged to go on with preaching the Gospel to the Indians, obtained several parcels of land for the Indians that gave any sincere hopes for their embracing of the Christian religion, as at Hassanamesit, a place up in the woods beyond Medfield and Mendon." From this time, for a period of twenty years,† Hassanamisco seems to have been an important centre of religious influence. There was a school here where the Bible was read and studied in the Indian language,‡ and young men went out as

* Mass. Hist. Col., Vol. VI., 2d Series, page 544. † Wilson's Sermon, p. 7.
‡ Gookin, Mass. Hist. Col., 1st Series, Vol. I., p. 194.

evangelists to the neighboring regions. In 1671,* Eliot formed an Indian church here, the second formed in the state. Three years later, in 1674,† Major Daniel Gookin, having visited this place in company with Mr. Eliot, wrote an account of it. He speaks of it as a small place, and says "It hath not above twelve families, and so according to our computation not above sixty souls. * * * This village is not inferior unto any of the Indian plantations for rich land and plenty of meadow, being well tempered and watered. It produces plenty of corn, grain and fruit; for there are several good orchards in this place. It is an apt place for keeping cattle and swine; in which respect this people are the best stored of any Indian town of their size. * * * Here they have a meeting-house for the worship of God after the English fashion of building, and two or three other houses after the frame mode, but they fancy not greatly to live in them. * * * There are in full communion in this church about sixteen men and women, and about thirty baptized persons; but there are several other members of this church that live in other places. This is a hopeful plantation."

In the year 1675, a century before the American Revolution, King Philip's war broke out, and during this war this promising settlement was entirely broken up,‡ and, though a number of the families returned after the war,§ yet the church was probably never re-established. The Indians themselves were divided in their allegiance, some adhering to the English throughout, and others taking side with Philip, and still others, at first, deserting the English, but afterwards returning

* Mass. Hist. Col., 1st Series, Vol. I., p. 185. † Ibid. ‡ Ibid., Vol. X., p. 134. § Wilson's Sermon, p. 9.

to them. It was during this war that quite an important battle was fought on Keith Hill, the English gaining the victory. The day upon which the battle was fought was stormy, and the Indians were not able to use their firearms, while the English, protecting their gun-locks with their garments, thereby gained a decided advantage. In the early part of the war, in order to prevent the Indians who were favorable to the English from being either destroyed or tampered with and drawn away from their allegiance, and on account of the great distrust felt towards them, all the friendly Indians of the Nipmuck country were confined at Hassanamesitt, and were forbidden to go more than one mile from their wigwams, upon penalty of imprisonment or death, the penalty to be inflicted by any person meeting them beyond these limits.* The hostile Indians, however, came upon this company of friendly Indians with a force of three hundred, and either compelled or persuaded about two hundred of them to join in the war against the English.† This led to an expedition against the town made up of two companies of English troops. Upon their arrival they found the place deserted, and pushed on to Packachoage, which was situated partly in Worcester and partly in Auburn, formerly known as Ward. The Indians fled upon their approach, and, after spending a night in the deserted wigwams, and hunting in vain for the Indians, the English returned. A few days after the commander of one of the companies, Capt. Henchman, with a few men returned to Hassanamesitt, and in the night made an attack upon a company

* Transactions and Col. Am. Antiquarian Society, Vol. II., p. 450; Gookin's Hist. of Praying Indians.

† Ibid., p. 475; Gookin's Praying Indians.

of about forty Indians who were staying in a wigwam. The Indians fought in the darkness with terrible desperation, killing two of his men. * The heads of these two men were found the next morning fastened upon croched sticks, and facing each other, in front of the wigwam; the grim delight of the Indians being thus most characteristically expressed. No traces were found of their own dead or wounded.

As I have said, a few of the Indian families returned after the war, and the Indians remained the sole proprietors of the land for upwards of forty years, or until the year 1718. In that year one Elisha Johnson purchased a tract of land upon condition that he would build and support a bridge over each branch of the Blackstone river. From the location of these bridges, which he supported till 1737,† and from the fact that Elisha Johnson lived in Sutton, I infer that this land must have been in the region of Saundersville. In this connection, I may as well mention a tradition in reference to the first white man who spent a winter in the town. I have not learned either the name of the man, or the time when he was here, but he is said to have come from Marlborough for the purpose of wintering some cattle upon the hay which had been cut from the meadows in what is known as "The Farms."‡ His hut was built near the present residence of Mr. Seth J. Axtell, and under the shelter of a large rock which is plainly visible from the road. And now that I am speaking of the first white man owning land, and of the first white man spending a winter here, it will be of interest to know

* Hubbard's Indian Wars, 1st ed., p. 45; Transactions and Col. of American Antiquarian Society, Vol. II., p. 480; Gookin's Praying Indians.

† Proprietors' Record.

‡ This district derives its name from the fact that it was originally the farm of a single proprietor.

that the mother of the first white child born here lies in the old burying ground. A few years since Capt. Benj. Kingsbury cleared off the old tombstone, and learned from the inscription upon it, that Mrs. Martha Willard was the wife of Maj. Joseph Willard, and the mother of the first white child born in town; that she died June 3d, 1791, in the 100th year of her age, leaving 12 children, 90 grandchildren, 226 great-grandchildren, and 53 of the fifth generation. Some of the latter, as well as of the sixth and seventh generations, and probably of the eighth, are still living in town, and more are scattered elsewhere. So far as the command to "be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth," is concerned, I can see no good reason why Mrs. Martha Willard, and some of her descendants, should not be justified by their works.

During the ten years succeeding the purchase of land by Elisha Johnson, several persons were allowed to make purchases, so that at the end of that period, in 1728,* there were nine English families resident here. In 1724, parties living chiefly in Marlborough, Sudbury, Stow, and Concord, desiring to purchase this "Plantation," or Indian reserve, petitioned the General Court for the privilege of doing so. A committee having been appointed to visit the town, consult the Indians, and ascertain the value of the land, reported that the Indians were willing to sell, and that it was the opinion of the committee that "the place was capable of being made a small town or village." This was in the month of May. The following December the House of Representatives voted to grant the request of the petitioners with certain restrictions. The Council, however, refused to concur, on the ground that the price was too

* Proprietors' Record.

low. The next May the petitioners came back again, arguing the importance of having an English settlement here, the advantage which would come to the Indians by means of preaching and a school, and expressing the hope that "they and the Indian proprietors might, in process of time, become a small town and be in a capacity to support a gospel minister." Another committee having visited the town and found that "one-half the land is good but very stony; and the other half pitch pine and shrub plain," fixed the valuation, with the proposed restrictions, at £2,500. The matter seems for some cause to have been delayed two years, but in 1727 the petition was granted. As I have said, the petitioners expressed the hope that in time, with the assistance of the Indians, they could support preaching. The Legislature was of the opinion that, at the price paid for the land, they could do this without the assistance of the Indians, and at once, and so the petition was granted on condition * that they should build a meeting-house and school-house, and settle a "learned orthodox minister," and that they should "constantly maintain and duly support a minister and school-master among them." The privileges of the school and ministry were to be shared equally with the whites by the Indians without charge. Another condition was that they should make a settlement in the town of forty English families, each of whom should build a good habitable house, and break up and fence at least four acres of land within three years. The Indians were each to have an equal portion of the land with the proprietors, and also one hundred acres to be appropriated to them and their heirs forever. The proprietors were also to build a mill at which the Indians should have their corn ground free

* Proprietors' Record, White's copy, p. 1.

of toll, and to set apart twenty acres of land for school purposes.* The purchase was made upon these conditions, and the deed signed March 19th, 1728. At once the purchasers set about fulfilling the conditions. In less than a month, on April 9th, a meeting of the proprietors was held, at which they voted first, to "take a survey of the Plantation of Hassanamisco, * * to find the centre plot of the Plantation;" and second, "that the meeting-house should be set up at or upon the centre of said Plantation, in case the land at the centre be accommodable; otherwise at the nearest accommodable place to the centre." † This meeting was held in Marlborough. ‡ Ten days later, and just one month after the deed was signed, on April 19th, the proprietors met on the ground to fix the location for the meeting-house. Upon repairing in a body to the spot found to be the centre, which is about thirty rods East and a little to the North of the centre of the Common, the place was found not to be "accommodable," being too moist. Consequently the present Common was fixed upon, and four acres were set off for a school-house, a pound, a meeting-house, and a training field. The pound was in the South-east corner of the Common; the school-house was separated from the pound by a driveway, and the meeting-house was in the centre, within the portion now enclosed. Thus it was, that in accordance with the principles and practice of the Fathers a century before, the first buildings planned for and erected, were the meeting-house and the school-house. Here, where we stand to-day, these grave and sober, earnest and godly men met, not under these trees

* This land was located just East of the Common, and was sold in 1783 and the proceeds formed a permanent school fund. (Town Records. Mr. Brigham's Address, p. 25). † Proprietors' Record. ‡ Ibid.

which* some of our hands have helped to set, but under the trees of the primal forest, to mark the spot where God's house should stand, and, perchance, at the same time, to fix the location of the school-house. The house for the worship of God, and the house for training the intellect of man, were placed side by side; and so religion and education were made the chief corner stones of the new town, as they were of all New England.† Mr. Wilson, in his sermon, says, "We seem to see them now, a little company of less than half a hundred, passing about among the tall forest trees, which stood all over these places that are now covered with human habitations. They were asking where shall be laid the foundations of a Christian temple, before yet the worshippers are come whose prayers and solemn praise are to consecrate it. Their own dwellings are not yet to be seen. The stakes are not set to mark the places where they are soon to rise. These things are to come after. Their Sabbath home first—their week-day tents in good time. To-day the wants of the soul—to-morrow the needs of the body."

The meeting-house, which is still standing, though removed a few rods, ‡ was 50 feet by 40, and 22 feet in height "between joynts," and had porches one story and a half high on three sides, and in the porches were stairways by which to pass to the galleries on each side of the house. Two of these porches are ingeniously put together so as to form a dwelling-house, which stands at the foot of Millbury street, the last house on the North side. The great feature of this house, especially in the eyes of children, was the huge sounding-board above the pulpit. § One who has often wondered at it,

* Common was fenced and trees planted in 1844. † Wilson's Sermon, p. 10.

‡ Proprietors' Record, White's copy, p. 14. § Capt. Benj. Kingsbury.

while his elders were absorbed in the eloquence of the preacher, or soundly sleeping, says, "to a boy it looked like an island suspended in air. To him it was an object of wonder and admiration, and in spite of the wise lessons from the pulpit, that sounding-board, with its paintings, its panelling, its gorgeous trimmings, the brilliant tassels hanging down from it, was the great and central power of attraction. And during service he busied himself by contemplating, in imagination, the ruin which would ensue if it should break from its moorings and come down with a crash upon the head of the preacher!" And if he chanced to take a nap, it would have been easy for him to have dreamed that this had really taken place, when, at the close of the prayer, the seats in the pews, which were hung with hinges and turned up during the prayer, were let down with a crash, which it is said could be heard a half-mile away when the windows were open. *The school-house is also well remembered, for some here present who are yet hardly fifty years of age, began their education in it, and played at recess on the walls of the old pound.

The original proprietors were 40 in number.† The upland was divided into eighty lots of forty acres each, to which was added an equal amount of meadow land, and these portions were assigned to the proprietors by lot. A few years after, more land was divided among them, about thirty acres to each proprietor. ‡

* This school-house was removed from the Common about 1832, and was used by Mr. Geo. Clapp as a carpenter's shop, and is now the wood-shed of Mr. John Whitney. The house was 21 feet by 16, and 7 feet "between joyns," and was completed in 1731. (Proprietors' Record, White's copy, p. 29).

† Proprietors' Record.

‡ The names of the proprietors are as follows: James Watson, Benjamin Willard, Joseph Willard, Joseph Rice, Jonathan Morse, David Harrington, Samuel Biglo, Samuel Stow, Zerrubabel Eager, Samuel Brigham, John Sherman, John Warren, Nathan Brigham, Sen., Charles Brigham, Jeremiah

The meeting-house being completed in 1730, steps were immediately taken to secure the "learned orthodox minister."* A Fast was appointed and kept,† and the next day after it, they voted to call Mr. Solomon Prentice of Cambridge. They offered Mr. Prentice a salary of "ninety pounds of passable money, or bills of public credit as money now passes from men to men or as the valuation of money shall be from time to time, or as said money rises and falls." This offer was afterwards increased to one hundred pounds,‡ and accepted by Mr. Prentice. The Congregational Church was organized, with twenty members, on the 29th day of December, 1731, and Mr. Prentice was ordained the day following. Thus, in almost exactly a century from the time when the first white men cast their eyes over this region, we find them in full possession, with their church organized, their pastor settled, and their school-house built. The covenant§ of the church, which I have not time to quote in full, was of that simple, broad and unsectarian character which marked the covenants of nearly all the early New England churches, and to which there is a strong tendency to return; one clause in this covenant was, "to use the Holy Scriptures as their platform, whereby they might discern the will of Christ, and not the new found inventions of men."

Barstow, Elizabeth Harrington, Samuel Chandler, John Hunt, Joseph Merriam, Eleazer Flagg, Jacob Taylor, Ebenezer Wheeler, Joseph Barrett, Benjamin Barrett, Samuel Hall, Simon Gates, Nath. Hapgood, Phineas Rice, Simon Gates, Jr., John Collier, William Rogers, William Rogers, Jr., Jona. Rice, Richard Tayler, John Jones, Jonas Houghton, John Davis, Thomas Weeks, Thomas Pratt, Nathl. Wilder.

The names of the Indians giving the deed are: Ami Printer, Andrew Abraham, Moses Printer, Ami Printer, Jr., Peter Muckamug and wife, Christian Misco and Joshua Misco. (Suffolk Deeds, lib. 42, folio 207).

* Proprietors' Record, White's copy, p. 42. † Ibid., p. 43. ‡ Ibid., p. 44.

§ Quoted in full in Mr. Wilson's Sermon, pp. 12, 13.

At the time of Mr. Prentice's settlement there were only nine pews in the meeting-house, the remaining space being filled with benches. The pews were large boxes, almost square, $4\frac{1}{2}$ by 5 feet, with seats on three sides, and so high that when the people sat down they could not see each other, but could only see the preacher who towered above them in his high pulpit, and poured the gospel down into these "pits," as they were not inappropriately called. The fashions could only be studied while the people were standing during prayer. Mr. Prentice * filled the requirements concerning a minister, being a graduate of Harvard College, and so "learned," and thoroughly Calvinistic, and so "orthodox." He seems to have been a man of deep piety, of great purity of character, of a kind spirit, and yet very earnest and independent, as well as somewhat impulsive. When Whitefield was in this country Mr. Prentice at once entered heartily into the new movement, and it is said that Whitefield preached in his pulpit. Out of this movement, or perhaps more accurately, out of the religious controversy which followed this movement, trouble arose which finally resulted, after several Councils had been held, in the dismissal of Mr. Prentice, at the end of a pastorate of sixteen years.† The house in which he lived is still standing. It is located on Oak street, and is owned by Mr. James B. Stratton, and true to its first purpose, is still a minister's home, being occupied by Rev. Mr. Hussey. After leaving Grafton he preached in several other places but finally returned and died here, May 22d, 1773. I have said that he was "orthodox," and yet he could hardly have been up to the standard of the times on the Sunday question, for it

* Extended account of Mr. P., in Genealogy of Prentice Family. † Church Records; Mr. Brigham's Address, p. 27; Mr. Wilson's Sermon, p. 17.

is said * that, on his way to the church one Sunday morning, seeing a bear in a tree, he returned to his house for his gun, and shot the prowler. He may have excused himself on the ground that it was a "deed of necessity or mercy;" but if he was a good shot, as he seems to have been, the strength of the temptation alone would seem a sufficient excuse. This incident, which is well vouched for, shows so much good sense, and such an amiable weakness, that I have never been inclined to credit the tradition that he refused to baptize a child because it was born on Sunday.

Mrs. Prentice seems to have been a woman of learning and independence of thought and character.† It is said that "she was so conversant with the Bible that she could repeat any part of it, and could write a good sermon." I find it stated that when Mr. Prentice "courted" her, they sat on a trunk of a tree in the woods, and he proposed to her in the language of Naomi to Ruth, and she accepted him with Ruth's reply. But the course of true love did not always run smooth. In her independence she adopted religious views of her own, one of which was that immersion was true baptism, and during the absence of her husband, was immersed. On his return the theological war, which was already raging in the parish, broke out in the household, and during it, as tradition says, he exclaimed, "Ah, it's water, it's water is it that you want? Well, you shall have water," and he dashed a pailful over her. This was probably but a temporary affair, a sudden domestic storm which soon passed and left the skies clearer and brighter than ever. At all events, in his will he provided most carefully for her,‡ making provision that "his wife Sarah is to live

* Genealogy of Prentice Family. † Ibid. ‡ Ibid.

in his house, and have all his household goods and furniture and indoor movables; his riding chair and horse, which is to be well kept for her, summer and winter, and replaced if he fails; her fire-wood cut at her door; as much *cyder* as she shall have occasion to use in the house; full and free liberty to put up a friend's horse or horses, to hay in winter and grass in summer, when they come to visit her, &c.: all to be provided by Solomon for her sole use and benefit during her natural life. £16 to be paid her annually by my sons." Both sleep, side by side, in the old burial ground here, and doubtless the result of their labors in these early years has been more potent upon the character and welfare of this town than any of us can know or think, for communities, as well as individuals, owe much to early influences.

But in speaking of Mr. Prentice, I have passed one of the most important events in the history of the town—an event of no less importance than its birth. When the church was formed and the pastor settled, there was no town, nor was there for some four years after. * In 1734 a committee was appointed to prepare a petition to the General Court to incorporate it as a town. The petition was presented in April of the next year, and was granted, the bill being signed by Gov. Belcher, April 18th (O. S.), 1735.

I have had considerable curiosity in reference to the origin of the present name. I find that various principles governed in the selection of names for the new towns. Early, the towns were named after places in the old country—not always however out of any partic-

* Proprietors' Record, White's copy, p. 59. A committee was appointed in 1732 to consider the propriety of such a step. See Proprietors' Record, White's copy, p. 49.

ular affection for the places thus honored. For example,* the battle of Worcester was, what is quaintly termed, Cromwell's "crowning mercy," and so the name was chosen for our neighboring city in defiance of the king. † From 1724 a custom arose of complimenting distinguished Englishmen by naming towns for them. Up ‡ to 1732 it was the custom for the incorporators to select the names, but after that period the acts of incorporation passed both Houses of the Legislature in blank, and the name was put in by the Governor. So Grafton is indebted to Gov. Belcher for its name. Charles Fitz Roy, Duke of Grafton, was a member of the Privy Council. He was a grandson of Charles II., and held many high offices. He died May 6, 1757.

The act of incorporation imposed upon the inhabitants the same obligations concerning school and preaching free of charge for the Indians, which the original proprietors had been under, and when the property was conveyed to the town it was upon condition that the town should relieve the proprietors from their obligations to the Trustees for the Indians.§ But the bond for that purpose was not given until 1773,|| or nearly thirty-five years after the property was conveyed to the town. There is too much reason to fear that this unaccountable and inexcusable neglect is indicative of the loose manner in which the business relating to the Indians was generally conducted. Unfortunately the record in relation to the Indians is not altogether such as we could desire, though perhaps the State authorities are more at fault than the officers of the town. The price paid for the land, £2,500, was held by trustees

* Essay on names of towns in Mass., by Wm. Henry Whitmore p. 16.

† Ibid., p. 7. ‡ Ibid., pp. 19, 20. § Proprietors' Record, White's copy, p. 91.

|| Ibid., p. 141.

appointed by the State, in trust for the Indians. Of this sum, which the State received in gold and silver coin, \$1,330.89 were lost by substituting therefor depreciated paper currency in 1745. Between the years 1772 and 1796, the trustees having permitted one of their number to become indebted to the fund on his own personal obligation, to the amount of \$1,327.49½, this sum was lost. And then prior to July, 1841, the small remnant of the fund, together with some that had been added by sale of other land, was invested in "such securities that neither principal nor interest was ever paid."* It certainly seems as if the descendants of these Indians, a few of whom remain, have good ground of complaint against somebody.

After the incorporation of the town, the next important events in its history are connected with the † French war in the years 1753 to 1762. During this war the inhabitants exhibited the same self-denying patriotism which has been characteristic of the town in all its subsequent history. When news came of the advance of Montcalm upon Fort William Henry, Grafton and Upton at once turned out a company, of which thirty-six of the members were from this town. During the entire war, Grafton bore its full share of the burden, as will be readily seen in the fact ‡ that, out of a population of seven hundred and fifty, it lost, by disease and in battle, eighty men,—more than one in ten of its entire population. At different times this town, in common with the State generally, had in the service

* Report to Governor and Council on Indians, under act of April 6, 1859, p. 96. (Senate Doc., No. 96, 1861).

† For extended account of Grafton's part in this war, see Mr. Brigham's Address, p. 16, &c.

‡ Mr. Brigham's Address, p. 17; Manuscript Records of Mrs. Wheeler in possession of Mr. Jona. D. Wheeler.

a large portion of her able-bodied men. Mr. Brigham says, and doubtless with exact truth, that this French * war was the school in which the heroes of the Revolution were educated; and that without the preparatory discipline which it afforded, independence would not have been gained.

The only other incidents of importance before the Revolution, were the changes in the ministry, and these were always of importance. In 1750, nearly three years after the dismissal of Mr. Prentice, Mr. Aaron Hutchinson was ordained second pastor of the church. He also was "learned," having been educated at Yale, and "orthodox" in the extreme. Having been called to sit on a Council at Newbury,† he was invited to preach on an intervening Sabbath at Newburyport. The Council had been called on account of the supposed defection of the pastor from Calvin, and Mr. Hutchinson's sermon was aimed at this heresy, and was probably rather more "orthodox" than any sermons preached in these days. At all events, it resulted in a warm controversy carried on in sermons and pamphlets. All the accounts of Mr. Hutchinson make mention of his extraordinary memory, of which he seems to have had a little natural pride himself. He would sometimes enter the pulpit and conduct the entire service without opening a book, read or repeat his hymns, naming the verses to be omitted, and in the same manner the scripture lessons, shrewdly adding at the end of the lesson, that he *might* be mistaken, and therefore it would be well for his hearers to look the passage over at home after service. There is a tradition that he claimed that he could re-write the entire New Testament if it should

* Mr. Brigham's Address, p. 16. † Mr. Wilson's Sermon, p. 22.

be lost. Besides preaching, he combined the occupations of farmer and teacher. He fitted young men for college, and in order to economize time, was accustomed to have his pupils follow him at the plow and recite their Greek and Latin. All accounts of him contain hints of peculiarities. There are many traditions indicating the nature of these peculiarities. One of the least objectionable of these was his habit of riding from door to door in his parish and inquiring the bill of fare for dinner that day, and, selecting the one that best suited his taste or fancy, inviting himself to partake. He seems not to have been possessed of the most refined table manners- often appropriating to himself the larger portion of any dish which pleased him. At one time, when a company of ministers were at the table, one began helping himself to pudding from the plate of Mr. Hutchinson, and when remonstrance was made, declared that he always cut from the largest piece. The students who boarded in his house are said not to have been afflicted with any of the diseases which result from over-eating. In order to avoid the inconvenience and additional expense of having his neighbors' swine respond to his calls, he resorted to the ingenious and eminently successful artifice of calling his own in the Latin language. The fact that Mr. Hutchinson remained pastor of the church twenty-two years, is evidence that he must have been possessed of worthy qualities of mind and character which, in the judgment of his people, far outweighed that which was disagreeable in his conduct. After he was dismissed by the church, according to the advice of a council, and at his own request, the town voted not to concur and refused to release him, and the town never did by vote consent to his dismissal. Many were dissatisfied with the action of the church. When

the town was afterwards asked to join in a call to his successor, Mr. Abner Temple, a sort of wag, made the objection that "the church has not informed the town what is become of their old minister." This Abner Temple is the man, who, in building his house, had the foundation stones dressed on both sides, and in reply to a question as to his reason for this unnecessary labor and expense, indignantly asked the questioner, if he supposed he would be a hypocrite?

After Mr. Hutchinson's dismissal in 1771, three years passed before a successor was found. Until within a few years of this time, there had been but one church in the town. In Mr. Prentice's time there was a sect which was called "New Lights," probably from the fact that they claimed to possess some superior inward illumination in reference to truth or duty. These were succeeded by a strange sect, which had its head-quarters in this town, known as the "Live Forever." I am told, upon what I deem excellent authority,* that the general impression that these people believed that they would not die, is a mistake. They believed that they would die and rise again after three days, as Christ did. Consequently when the leader of the sect, a man by the name of Ireland, died here, his friends and followers kept the body so long that the authorities interfered and ordered his burial. Then the Shakers were accustomed for a time to hold public meetings in this town. In 1767 the Baptists had acquired such strength here and in the neighboring towns, that, by uniting they were able to form a church. †This church however did not have a long life, being dropped from the Warren Association in 1788, for heresy on the part of the pastor and a

* Capt. Benj. Kingsbury. † Records of Warren Association.

majority of its members. The present Baptist Church was organized in 1800.

During the year 1774, the successor of Mr. Hutchinson, Rev. Daniel Grosvenor, was ordained third pastor of the Congregational Church. This brings us to the stirring events preceding the Revolution. The encroachments of the British Government upon the rights of the colonists had created great dissatisfaction. The inhabitants of Boston, under the leadership of Samuel Adams, had voted to appoint a "Committee of Correspondence, to consist of twenty-one persons, to state the rights of the colonists, and of this province in particular, as men, as christians, and as subjects; and to communicate and publish the same to the several towns and the world, as the sense of this town, with the infringements and violations thereof that have been, or from time to time may be made." As early as February 1st, 1773, Grafton,* in town meeting, responds to one of the letters of this committee, by resolving unanimously "that they would defend their rights at all hazards; that they would not suffer their property to be taken from them in an unconstitutional manner, and that they were ready to co-operate with their brethren in Boston, and other places, in any measures to obtain a redress of grievances." During the latter part of this same year came the excitement concerning the destruction of the tea in Boston harbor. A town meeting was held, and a committee appointed to "look into a letter sent from Boston." Said committee reported January 4, 1774, as follows: "The town of Grafton, taking into consideration the unhappy circumstances that this country are

*The statements concerning the action of the town at various times before and during the Revolutionary war, are made upon the authority of the Town Records.

involved in at this crisis, attempts repeatedly being made infringing upon our rights and privileges, which we consider justly alarming to all the true friends of our happy constitution, which hath been so dearly purchased and which we esteem to be our most invaluable interest and rights as Englishmen, which we have ever gloried in; more particularly at the glaring injustice of that of the East India Company being allowed to send tea to America, while subject to a duty payable in America, which we view as subversive of our rights as christians, as subjects, and as loyal subjects of our most gracious King George, whose name and person we ever desire to view as sacred. Therefore, Resolved, as the people of this town, that any one individual, or any body of men, that shall encourage, aid or assist, in importing or receiving any such tea, or any other article while subject to a duty, the sole purpose whereof is to raise money to appropriate to any sordid measure, or any use whatever contrary to our just rights of distributing our own property, wherewith God and nature hath made us free, can but be viewed as criminal to our country, as well as to the mother state, and must be so viewed by us. Resolved, that this town are in duty bound to join with and assist our sister towns and colonies in this our common cause, so as we may be instrumental under God of handing down that liberty to our posterity which hath been kept so long inviolate and preserved by our worthy ancestors." Then follows a resolution approving the stand taken by Boston and other towns. These resolutions certainly have a ringing sound which, unless the hint contained in them is heeded by the mother country, fortells the coming of the Fourth of July, three years later. During this same year the dark cloud of war is seen rising on the distant

horizon, a cloud it may be, almost ridiculously small, no larger than one field-piece with powder and bullets to match, and yet one which is destined to spread over the entire land, and hang long and low, but finally to be dissipated by the glorious sunlight of liberty. The first indication of arming is in the action of the town, September 28, 1774, when the record says, "Voted to procure a good field-piece, called a six-pounder." "By vote chose Nathaniel Sherman to procure a supply of bullets and shot to load said field-piece." "By vote chose Thomas Davidson to command said field-piece." "Put to vote to see if the town will choose a committee to provide for the soldiers of Grafton in case they are called to battle. Passed in the affirmative." These are the mutterings of war which were heard more than six months before the battle of Lexington. The collectors of taxes were directed to pay none of their receipts into the treasury of the Province. The following February, the 22nd, it was "voted to pay minute men for the time in training in learning the military art." Action was also taken about this time to encourage home manufactures, and so become independent of England. March 6th, 1775, it was "Voted to recommend to each inhabitant of this town to be careful to save their rags suitable for y^e paper manufactory; that they endeavor to their utmost to supply Henry Prentice and Timothy Fletcher, collectors of y^e same; and in general support our own manufactories by preferring them to foreign ones." The crisis approaches. A warrant for a town meeting is issued on April 17, the meeting to be held the 24th. It was customary to have these meetings called by the constable, who notified each voter in the town. In this instance the constable made return that he had notified all but two or three, "which

by reason of the special alarm then existing he was prevented opportunity to complete."

The eventful 19th of April came. Already the little community, in common with all others in the State, was in a condition of feverish anxiety, in hourly expectation of a call to arms. About noon a horseman dashes into town bringing intelligence that the British troops are marching on Concord to destroy the military stores accumulated there. Having delivered his message, and perchance exchanged his horse for a fresh one, he dashes on to the next town, at every isolated home on the way, without stopping, declaring the fearful news which banishes every lingering hope of a peaceful solution of the steadily increasing troubles. There is "mustering in hot haste." Messengers fly over the town; the people come flocking to the Common. Men, women, children are there. There are pale faces, and tearful eyes, but none waver. Bold defiance speaks in eye, tone, gesture and deed. Ere the sun goes down nearly every able-bodied man in the town, from the youth in earliest manhood to the gray headed patriarch, is on the march to Cambridge. Nearly a hundred are there of them. Among the number and marching side by side in the ranks with the common soldier, and bearing his musket, was the young and popular pastor of the church who had been ordained just six months that very day. So early in the history of our town did religion and politics, religion and patriotism, go hand in hand, the preacher himself declaring his faith by his works. * Says Mr. Brigham, in alluding to this day, "To those of us who have never witnessed the horrors of war, it is hardly possible to realize, even in imagination, the scene which their

* Mr. Brigham's Address, p. 20.

departure presented." Unfortunately, it is only too easy for us who have been familiar with the horrors of war, to realize, to its fullest extent, the experiences of that day. May God forbid that he who comes after me fifty-nine years hence, shall be able to speak to a people whose experience tells them aught of war and its horrors. But knowing how yourselves, your sons, and husbands, and brothers marched to the conflict of arms, you have a bond of sympathy with the patriot soldiers, parents, wives and sisters of 1775.

From this time, the records of the town bear a striking resemblance to those which have been made in our day. Committees are appointed to "deal out their family blankets to supply the soldiers." It is voted "to order the town treasurer to give notes upon interest, at twenty pounds each man, to the number of twenty-four men, that shall enlist for the expedition for New York," also "to give twenty pounds to each man who shall enlist for the northern expedition." A vote is passed "to give thirty pounds to each man that shall enlist into the army for three years or the war." A committee was appointed to collect money and clothing for the continental soldiers, and the report of said committee, with list of donors, and of amounts and articles donated, follows. The last warrant issued in the name of his majesty, was that of April 17, 1775, of which I have already spoken. A month later the warrant was "in pursuant of a resolve of congress," and in May, 1776, it was "in the name of the Government and people of Massachusetts Bay." June 7, 1776, it was voted to "comply with the resolve

* MASSACHUSETTS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, }
May 10, 1776.

Resolved, as the opinion of this house, that the inhabitants of each town in this colony ought, in full meeting warned for that purpose, to advise the person or persons who shall be chosen to represent them in the next General

of the House of Representatives concerning independence from the kingdom of Great Britain." This was only a month before the declaration of independence. The articles of confederation were assented to January 23, 1778. In April of that same year the town refused, by a vote of sixty-six to one, to approve of a state constitution submitted by the Legislature. *The same constitution was rejected in the State by a vote of 10,000 to 2,000; Boston voting against it unanimously.

We find traces of disaffection however in these days, and, if Grafton did not have actual tories, there were some suspected characters. In April, 1777, a member of the committee to hire men for service in the Continental army, was dismissed by vote of the town, because "not firm and friendly to this state." The following July however, he was restored to his position upon his own petition. They also had their financial troubles, and tried the ever popular and never successful experiment of seeking relief in legislation. An act was passed to "prevent monopoly and oppression," in other words to keep down prices, which, as demand increased and production diminished, and paper money fluctuated in value, manifested a strong upward tendency. In accordance with this act, the selectmen and a committee, † "met to affix and settle the price" of all articles in general use. The extent to which this was carried, is seen, e. g. in this record, "Philip, made of the best New England rum at 8d. per mug, and made from West India rum 10d." "A meal of victuals of their best kind,

Court, whether that, if the honorable congress should, for the safety of the said colonies, declare them independent of the kingdom of Great Britain, they, the said inhabitants, will solemnly engage, with their lives and fortunes, to support the Congress in the measure. SAMUEL FREEMAN, *Speaker*. (Journal of the House of Representatives.—Note).

*Barry's History of Mass., 3d period, p. 175. † See Appendix.

not to exceed 1s. 6d., and common kind 8d." The list embraces all kinds of farm produce; all kinds of labor; hotel bills; in fact, it was evidently intended to cover whatever was in any way in the market. Their financial troubles are manifest also in the expedients resorted to in settling the bounties of the soldiers; but I must not dwell upon this period.

Although victory crowned our arms, and peace was finally established upon the basis of perfect political independence of the mother country, yet the trials were not over. Dark days followed. The debt was enormous, the currency was depreciated, industry was paralyzed, and property was sacrificed. In our own State a powerful party arose which complained that the governor's salary was too high, the senate aristocratic, the congress extortionate, and taxes too burdensome to bear; they demanded an issue of paper money, and the removal of the General Court from Boston. This party finally resorted to arms and the movement is known as "Shays' Rebellion." The insurgents prevented the holding of courts in Worcester and Springfield, and attempted to capture the arsenal at the latter place. The inhabitants of this town seem to have sympathized with this movement, and probably some of them actually took up arms. At all events, a company of Shays' men, marching through the town, were entertained with supper and breakfast by Col. Jonathan Wheeler. That this sympathy was general appears from the instructions given to their representatives to the General Court the next year after the rebellion was quelled, which are in favor of almost every change urged by the insurgents. In these instructions, direction is given to the representative "to use his utmost exertion to obtain a general pardon for all that aided or

assisted, or have taken up arms, in what the Governor and General Court *styled* rebellion &c.”

This crisis safely passed, the town, in common with the country in general, gradually entered upon a career of growth and prosperity. * The population, which, during the Revolutionary war, was between 800 and 900, had increased, in 1810, to 946; in 1820, to 1,154; in 1830, to 1,889; and in 1835, to 3,036.† Manufactories sprung up along the river courses, and important and flourishing villages were the result. In 1835 the town, then evidently experiencing great prosperity and rapid increase, celebrated the completion of the first century of its history, and a most admirable and exhaustive historical address was delivered by Hon. William Brigham, an honored son of the town. Meanwhile another church, the Unitarian, had been organized. This was in the year 1832, August 5th.

Nothing of particular importance occurred till the breaking out of the Rebellion in 1861; and I hardly need detain you to tell the part that Grafton played in that terrible conflict, for there are many here present who, with old Aeneas can in truth say: “*Quaeque ipse miserrima vidi, et quorum pars magna fui.*” What scenes of misery I saw myself and those in which I bore a principal part.

* In 1765, houses 109, families 109, males 371, females 371, colored 21; total 763.

	WHITES.	COLORED.		WHITES.	COLORED.
In 1776,	861		In 1840,	2,943	19
1790,	872		1850,	3,904	12
1800,	985	18	1860,	4,317	16
1810,	946	12	1870,	4,594	
1820,	1,154	12	1875,	4,442	
1830,	1,889	16			

1875, number of houses 716, number of families 951.

† Address of Mr. Brigham, Appendix I.

You remember well the 19th of April, 1861—a day as memorable for the pain it brought, and for the patriotism it evoked, as the 19th of April, 1775; a day, the deeds of which called forth proof that the sons then resident in Grafton, were worthy sons of worthy sires,—proof of which was rolled up day after day, month after month, and year after year, during those terrible five years. Not as in 1775, from lips of a horseman dashing into town with foaming steed and clattering hoofs, came the tidings of war actually begun; but on the morning of April 20th, over the silent wires flashed the news that the sons of Massachusetts, who had promptly responded to the nation's call for defenders, had been shot down, the day before, in the streets of Baltimore. Again flew messengers over the town. Again from all quarters came flocking the citizens to consult concerning the public safety. You remember that meeting, in the hall, held at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, and presided over by one of Grafton's worthiest and wisest sons, then in all the vigor of mature manhood, and since gone to his rest, Col. Charles Brigham. Some of you will never forget the earnest words he uttered, in a voice tremulous with emotion; nor how afterwards, you came to wonder at the exact comprehension which he seemed to have of the situation, and of what was to come. On the platform with him sat that veteran of the Revolutionary war, Mr. Benjamin Smith, then in his 98th year, the one surviving link which united April 19, 1775, to April 19, 1861. The intense solemnity and earnestness of that meeting are deeply graven on the memories of very many, perhaps the most of you. Steps were taken to form a company, and a full one was organized that very day. A legal meeting of the town was called at the earliest day

possible, April 29th, the warrant for it being issued the same evening. You remember well the almost wild enthusiasm of that meeting; how it was voted to appropriate \$4,000, as a fund for organizing the company; and that each member should receive one dollar per day while engaged in drilling, and, when called into active service, was to receive from the town the same monthly pay as from the government. This latter provision could not be carried out on account of legal objections, but the vote shows the liberality, and patriotism, and enthusiasm of the citizens. The company, which was immediately formed, became Company G of the Fifteenth Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteers, and was sent to "Camp Scott," in Worcester. You remember well—it is impossible to forget—the scenes presented in two of these churches, the Sunday before the company departed, when it marched in a body into them to listen to sermons addressed particularly to the members. In the morning, the soldiers' true friend, and afterwards companion, Rev. Mr. Scandlin, addressed them in the Unitarian Church; and what an impression was made, as, in the midst of a terrible thunder and hail storm, he gave out that prophetic and cheering hymn, reading to the music of rattling hail and rolling thunder, the following words:

"Through night to light! And though to mortal eyes
Creation's face a pall of horror wear,
Good cheer! good cheer! The gloom of midnight flies:
Soon shall a sunrise follow, mild and fair.
Through storm to calm! And though his thunder-car
The rumbling tempest drives through earth and sky,
Good cheer! good cheer! The elemental war
Tells that a blessed, healing hour is nigh."

In the afternoon, he who ministered in the pulpit of the Congregational Church for upwards of thirty years,

and whose eloquence there are none to question, Rev. Mr. Biscoe, delivered to "the boys" a most eloquent and impressive sermon from the text "Quit you like men; be strong." Perchance you can now see the little girls, like white robed angels, moving among that band of soldiers after the sermon, and giving to each member a copy of God's Word of Truth. What stories these Bibles would tell if now gathered and permitted to speak! And you cannot have forgotten how, just before starting, solemn religious services were held upon the common, nor that the company was then escorted to Worcester by the selectmen and citizens, on horseback and in carriages. That parting at the camp, when the soldier-boys were left behind, and loving and honoring relatives and friends returned home to begin the painful watch for tidings, who, but they who were there can tell its pain, its hopes, its fears? Cursed be war, and thrice cursed be the evil cause that creates the necessity for it! From that early day to the end of the fearful strife,—and many were the dark and disheartening days when evil tidings came,—Grafton never faltered in her patriotic devotion. Only one less than a round four hundred men, out of a population of about four thousand, did she send to the war, a number larger by nearly half a hundred than all demands upon her. On the base of yonder beautiful monument are inscribed, in letters which the patriots coming after us for centuries will keep clear and legible, the names of the fifty-nine victims whom Grafton gave—rather who gave themselves—for the nation's life. These names will be read by children, and children's children, for generation after generation; and, as they are read, voices will come from the scattered graves of the dead, bidding those who read, to love, to honor, to cherish, to

defend the institutions for which they laid down their lives.

But while men constitute the most valued treasures given to the nation, yet it must not be forgotten that Grafton was generous with material aid also. With a valuation of property amounting to little more than a million and a half dollars, she paid, for war purposes, the sum of thirty-nine thousand three hundred and fifty dollars, exclusive of State aid. Bearing in mind that, in addition to its other burdens of taxation, Grafton freely poured out of its material treasures nearly forty thousand dollars during the war, and gave one in ten of her entire population to stand in the ranks of the army, and generously surpassed all demands upon her for men, all will agree that it was a well earned compliment which Governor Bullock paid the town, on the day when that monument was dedicated, as he said, * "I feel bound in truth and justice, to say that no other town appears to have contributed to the late war a larger proportion than yours of its treasures and its men." And to-day, pointing your eyes to that beautiful monument, I say to you in the words of the beloved and honored Scandlin, a worthy successor in the ministry of the patriotic Grosvenor of 1775, † "I rejoice in the public spirit that could rise above the pressure of taxes and the burden of debt — faithful to its plighted word — true to those who have honored the town by deeds of daring, by the offering of life." In behalf of the hundreds of Grafton's sons, whose homes are no longer on your grand and beautiful hills, nor in your deep and fertile valleys, I say, in all honesty, and with the deepest fervor, we are proud of your record during the war, and in our homes in other villages and cities, and on western prairies, we will teach

* The Worcester Daily Spy, October 14th, 1867. † Ibid.

our children to honor the place of their fathers' nativity because it has honored itself by a record so grand and glorious!

And speaking of these absent sons reminds me to say in closing, that it is not a matter of special regret, much less of reproach, that latterly your increase has not been more rapid. It is true that forty years from 1835 have added only about fourteen hundred to your population. In this country where thriving towns and even large cities leap into commanding positions in a few years, this growth seems slow. But, mark you, growth does not necessarily indicate or measure power. "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth." Many a New England town, even decreasing in population, or at a stand-still, is exerting a greater power through its very decrease, or lack of increase, than tenfold larger towns and cities are exerting by their boasted growth. Go where you will in this broad land, East or West, North or South, and where you find, to an unusual degree, thrift, and energy, and enterprise in business, you are very sure to find New England brains behind them. Go into the schools and colleges of the older portions of the country, and of the new, and you find that the majority of the founders, supporters, and instructors of these institutions of learning are sons of New England. Go into the churches, and among clergy and laity, you trace constantly the power of New England. And whence came these scattered thousands of New England business men, educators, preachers, and christian philanthropists? They came from the country towns of New England, and these towns are checked in their growth because their sons are elsewhere exerting their power. These towns give their offspring active brains, physical strength, educa-

tion, habits of industry and frugality, and then send them forth to use these sources of power in moulding other communities. It is true that a nest forsaken of its young, is a dreary thing to look at, and yet these forsaken nests, so many of which it is easy to find at this season of the year, tell of myriads of trees in forest, and field, and around the shaded home, and along the highway and by-way, which are bright and beautiful with the plumage of wings which have borne the young hence ; they tell also of the rich melody of song which swells, and fills the air miles and miles away. So, too, the garden, gone or going to seed, may present an unsightly aspect, when contrasted with that which offers its ripening fruit and vegetable for present use. And yet, how much richer in promise is the former than the latter, when we remember that these seeds make sure, or possible, a hundred other gardens rich in the best of their kind ! It is wise to honor the seed-bed with the greatest care. Better, and more worthy of pride and care, the New England town kept weak by scattering its sons and daughters well trained in thrift, intellectual acquirements, moral and religious principles, to lay the foundation of other towns like itself, than the "smart village," or thriving city, that puts its sons into the money-making treadmills at home, or pets and pampers them in idle effeminaey. Who cares for the growth of New England so long as it can continue to give principles, and institutions, and men to the nation ? Who cares for the growth of New England if the entire nation becomes New Englandized ?

But though I speak in this strain, it is not because I see about me here evidences of decay ; though Grafton has not rushed forward as rapidly as some towns, yet she has made constant and healthful progress. She has

increased the number of her inhabitants, and on all hands, in public improvements, and in the air of comfort and taste which pervades her homes, both in the villages and on the farms, there is abundant and pleasing evidence of thrift and progress. * Mr. Brigham, in his address, speaking of the evidences of progress, asks what our ancestors would have thought had they been told, among other things, "that across the northern section of the town iron rails would be laid, over which would pass with the rapidity of the wind, a wonderful machine, belching forth fire and smoke, and moving by an internal power, dragging in its train car after car, load after load, and never tiring?" And now we ask, what would he have thought and those to whom he spoke, if they had been told that, in forty years, besides an additional set of iron rails across another section of this town, there would be a set laid to the very summit of this hill, and that many times each day, that "wonderful machine" would come puffing and blowing and screaming across the pastures up the hill? What would he have thought if told that, when, in forty-one years, the town would desire to celebrate the Centennial of the nation, it would send for one of its sons a thousand miles distant, and that he would be able to leave his home early Monday morning and be here on Tuesday in ample time for the celebration? What would he have thought if told that, on the coast of the Pacific, three thousand miles away, there would spring up, within that forty years, one of the richest, and most populous and powerful States of the Union; and that, within these forty years, also, the iron rails should span all the distance thither, and that, on this Centennial year, one of these trains should fly across the continent in three

* Mr. Brigham's Address, p. 32.

and a half days? What would he have thought, if told that the means of communication would be such that the politician might sit in his own private office in Washington, and direct, each moment, the action of his friends in a convention a thousand miles away? That the editor in New York might write his editorials after the close of the public activities of the day, and have them all printed before daylight in Cincinnati. What, if told that, in case the God of Day were to turn gossip, and attempt to tell upon his arrival over New York, what he saw or heard on rising over England, the newspaper reporters would cut him short with the assurance that they had heard of that five hours before? What, if told that the great city in that new and far-off Western State, on the shores of the Pacific, began each day's business with a perfect knowledge of the business transacted to the close of business hours that same day in London?

But I may not detain you longer with these curious questions. As old Galileo said of the world, so say we, "It does move," and that too in more senses than Galileo intended, and in more ways than I have time to recall. In Science, in Art, in Philosophy, in practical morality, and in religion, there have been, at least in certain directions, leaps forward, almost as unexpected and as wonderful, as in the methods of transportation and communication of which I have been speaking.

And this occasion especially reminds us that in government too there has been progress. The experiment of a government by the people is an assured success. Through all the ever-changing and trying scenes of a hundred years; through the dangers of war, in repelling

* Actual feats of travel, communication, and newspaper enterprise performed during the year 1876.

foes from without, and in the more difficult and dangerous work of quelling rebellion within; through the dangers which years of national prosperity bring—for in peace and prosperity lurk dangers hardly less to be dreaded than those which attend upon war and adversity—through all these the government, founded by our fathers, the germs of which were in the compact signed in the cabin of the Mayflower, and the cardinal principles of which were applied in the founding of these New England towns and churches, this government by the people, has remained unshaken, and to-day is stronger, more healthful, and more promising than at the beginning of any one of the hundred years since its birth. The future is full of promise. That flag, with which the winds have now played for a hundred years, and which, during those years, has won or forced respect from every nation on earth, guarantees to our children, as it has secured for us, the full and free enjoyment of all the rights, and the exercise of all the powers, with which God has endowed us. Its great glory is that it permits and assists every man born under it, to make the most of himself. It is the flag of the people, of all the people. Like the sunlight and the rain, like God himself, it is no respecter of persons. It floats with equal promise, over hut, cottage and palace, and bids all the sons and daughters of this land, irrespective of birth and rank, a hearty welcome to any position for which, by genius or industry—often these are but different names for the same thing—for which, by genius or industry they may be fitted. To that flag, and to the principles taught in these free churches,—to that flag and to the Bible, we are, as individuals, as a community, and as a people, in debt for much that we prize highest in what we have, and in what we are, and

in that flag, and in the Bible, kept in just the relations which they have occupied in the past, centre also our highest hopes for the nation and for our children. And here to-day, to both the flag and the Bible, we solemnly and earnestly swear eternal loyalty.

APPENDIX.

[Extract from Town Records.]

"In 1777, agreeable to act of Court entitled 'An Act to prevent monopoly and oppression,' the Selectmen and Committee of the Town of Grafton have met and affixt and settled the price of articles hereafter mentioned, viz:—

		s.	d.
Wheat	Good and merchantable at 6/8 per bushel .	6	8
Rye	Good and merchantable rye 4/4	4	4
Indian	Corn and merchantable at 3/2.....	3	2
Wool	Good and merchantable at 2/ per lb.....	2	—
Pork	Fresh Pork well fattened and of good quality at 4 ^d per pound.....		4
Pork	Salt good midlings at 8 ^d ; 2d quality in proportion		8
Beef	good well fattened grass fed at 2 ^d 3 ^{qua} per pound		2 ³ / ₄
"	2d quality in equal proportion		
Beef	Stallfed well fattened 3 ^d 3 ^{qu} per pound		3 ³ / ₄
Hides	Raw at /3 per pound and Raw Calf at /6 ^d per pound		3
Cheese	good of the first quality at /5 ^d 2 ^{qua}		5 ¹ / ₂
Butter	at /9 pr single pound,—by the firkin /8 pr pound		/8
Pees	good at 7/ pr Bushel	7	/
Beans	good at 5/ per Bushel	5	/
Potatoes	good in the fall at 1/ per bus., in spring 1/4 ^d	1	1
Stockings	best yarn at 6/ pr pair.....	6	/
Shoes	men's made of neats leather at 7/6.....	7	6
Barley	good at 3/8 ^d	3	8
Oats	good at 1/9 per bushel.....	1	9
Innholders	for a meal of victuals of their best kind not to exceed.....	1	6
	And of common kind 8 ^d		/8
Philip	made of the best New England rum at /8 ^d pr mug		/8
	And made from West India rum not to exceed /10 ^d		/10

Half a gill of W. India at $\frac{1}{2}^d$ $\frac{1}{2}$ a gill of New
 1^d 2^{qr}

For keeping a horse 24 hours	$1/3^d$	1/ 3
“ “ Oxen 24 hours	$1/6$	1/ 6
For lodging a single person over night	.....	$/3\frac{1}{4}$
Mutton Stall fed at 3^d 2^{qr}$	.....	/3\frac{1}{2}$
Veal good from Dec. 1st to May 1st at $/3$ pr lb.		$/3$
Lamb good at $/3^d$ per pound	.....	$/3$
Milk New by grass at $/1^d$ 3^{qr} by Hay at $/2^d$ per quart	.....	$/1\frac{3}{4}$
English Hay best kind $2/6$ per hundred	.....	2/ 6
Barrels good heart barrels at $3/4$		3/ 4
Cider by the barrel $3/$ Cash at the press	.....	3/
“ Spring and Summer $6/$		6/
Shoes for making men's and women's shoes at $2/6$.		2/ 6
For shoeing a horse plain $4/4^d$		4/ 4
For ploughshares, Chain, Crowbars and Hoes, Cythes and all other Smith's work ac- cording to the former custom, making proper allowance for the extraordinary price of Iron and Steel.		
Charcoal delivered $/3^d$ per bushel	.....	$/3$
Ox labour $1/6$ pr day, horse 2^d per mile.		
Men's Labour from June to 15th of Aug. $3/$ per day, from Aug. to the last of Sept. $2/$ per day, and Mar., Ap. and Nov. $1/8$, Jan. Feb. $1/3$ per day.		
Onions at $3/$ per bushel.		
Carpenters labour from 1st of April to Oct. 1st at $3/3^d$ per day to be found as usual, and so in usual proportion at other seasons of the year.”		

[1777 page 304]

“Masons and Masonlabour the same as Carpenters at all seasons
of the year.

Tanning. For tanning hides not to exceed $1/2$ per pound and
skins in proportion.

Cloth Yard wide tow cloth at $3/2$ pr yard.

Maids' wages at $2/10^d$ pr week.

Mentailors work $2/2^d$ per day, and womens work at Tayloring
 10^d ”





